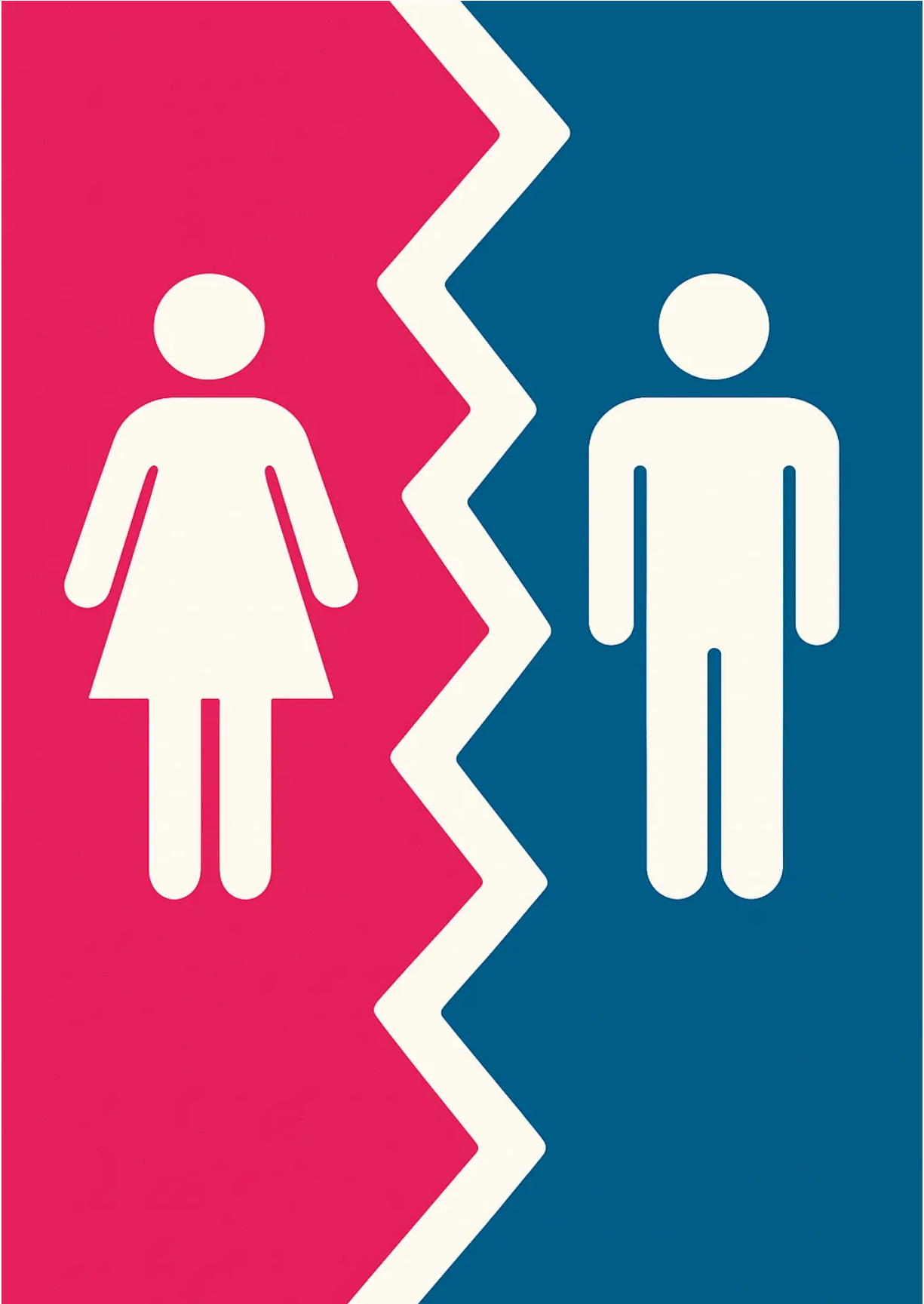


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Dear *Permission to be Powerful* Reader,

Every night, in three billion living rooms, the same quiet tragedy plays out.

Two people share a sofa but they might as well be living on different planets.

He wonders why she remembers a fight from 2019 down to the soundtrack.

She wonders how he can navigate back-country roads with nothing but the sun and bad confidence.

Both think the other is nuts.

Neither knows why.

But there's a reason.

And once you see it—you can't unsee it.

The Birth of Two Operating Systems

Picture a nursery. On the left crib lies a girl whose tiny brain floods the language centers like Vegas at midnight.

By preschool she'll be stringing sentences together so fast the dog cowers under the table.

On the right crib, a boy's brain hums in the spatial vaults; he can flip a toy truck in his mind and land it wheels down before he can spell 'truck.'

Neuroscientists at Stanford filmed this flick as it happened.

Left-amygdala lighting for girls (emotion + detail), right-amygdala for boys (gist + alert).

Nothing moral here—just two different factory settings.

Fast-forward twenty-five years. She stores emotional moments in 4K: the smell of rain after your first kiss, the exact shade of your bad apology.

He files the same events like receipts: date, venue, lesson learned, if any. This mismatch isn't carelessness; it's wiring.

When she says, “Remember what you said at Jill’s wedding?” she isn’t weaponizing memory—she’s scrolling her native file system.

When he squints back blankly, he isn’t gaslighting—he’s staring at an empty folder.

Watch any playground.

A girl falls. Another kneels, asks if it hurts, pats dust off jeans—empathy blooms early, fertilized by oxytocin and a culture cheering soft skills.

A boy the same age gets clipped, two seconds of silence, then a shove or a dare—testosterone and “walk it off” chants.

Years later those tiny cues bloom into patterns: she's quicker to read a board-room grimace, he's quicker to see a doorway as a potential threat or challenge.

She may internalize stress (hello anxiety), he may externalize it (hello bar fight or burnout race). Same volcano, different lava path.

Until 1974 a woman in America needed a male signature to get a credit card. Swiss women federal vote, 1971.

Marital rape illegal nationwide only since 1993.

Think that history vanished?

It echoes in every salary negotiation where she tiptoes and he barges.

The wage gap—23 percent global—looks less like an economic graph and more like sediment from centuries of “good girls don’t talk money.”

Meanwhile, men carry a quieter shackle: worth equals wallet; tears equal weakness. Tell a young man to discuss shame and you can see the circuits fry—no vocabulary installed.

Tell a young woman to stride alone down a dark street and watch her keys become claws. Two sets of reflexes, both exhausting.

Meta-analysis of 150 studies: men bet heavier chips in finance, dares, cliffs. Women hedge, live longer, and quietly beat men’s portfolios by trading less.

It isn't cowardice; it's calculus built from evolution and social reward.

Stack both instincts in one board—her due diligence, his bold trigger—and you get rockets that actually land.

Take Stockholm: dads on frost-slick sidewalks pushing prams like parade floats; cabinet seats near parity; daughters signing up for civil engineering because of course.

Happiness scores climb.

Take Tehran: hair slips the scarf, squad car screeches; borrowed rights, borrowed hope.

One geography prizes convergence, the other enforces divergence at gunpoint. Same species, wildly different versions of normal.

Here's the part that keeps me up at night: we share everything except experience.

He rarely senses the buzz of personal-safety math humming under female skin—route choices, drink covers, exit scans.

She rarely tastes the brutal pressure of “provide or you’re nothing,” the silence men are sentenced to inside their own castles.

We think we know each other because we cohabitate. But proximity without translation is just parallel loneliness.

That’s the heartbreak—the love of your life might never witness the world through your window, and vice versa. Unless you trade lenses on purpose.

The Cost of Not Knowing

Most couples don’t break up because of big betrayals.

They dissolve from the drip of small misfires.

The “you’re overreacting” here.

The “nothing’s wrong” shrug there.

The moment someone stopped asking questions because they assumed they already knew the answer.

What dies first is curiosity.

And curiosity, more than love, is what keeps two people orbiting the same sun.

Because here’s the twist:

What looks like drama may be data.

What feels like detachment may be defense.

Every tantrum hides a tender ask: *Do you see me?*

Every shutdown whispers a fear: *If I speak, will I still be loved?*

That's the tragedy.

We assume bad motives before we ask about old wounds.

The Hidden Labor

Most emotional labor doesn't show up in spreadsheets.

There's no job title called *keeper of the relationship thermostat*.

But if you've ever mentally tracked your partner's mood across the day...

If you've adjusted your tone because you sensed they were off...

If you've preemptively soothed, planned, or explained something just to avoid conflict...

You've done it.

And statistically? That person is usually her.

She's the emotional curator. The peacemaker. The invisible glue.

He's not heartless—he just wasn't trained for that domain.

Not in school. Not in sports. Not in most homes.

By the time he's twenty-five, he's fluent in stats, strategies, and sarcasm—but emotionally? Barely conversational.

It's not his fault.

But it is his responsibility.

Because in modern relationships, love isn't enough if one person is carrying the weight of three roles.

Trauma Leaves Maps

Here's something you won't hear in many romantic comedies:

Unhealed trauma changes your operating system.

It shrinks the window of tolerance—what therapists call your nervous system's comfort zone.

So when she flinches at a joke, or he stiffens at a simple request...
They may not be reacting to *you*.

They're reacting to the ghost behind you.

The alcoholic dad. The distant mom. The ex who lied. The childhood that taught them not to need anything because needs got punished.

And unless you know how trauma encodes itself, you'll think they're just being difficult.

But trauma doesn't scream, "I'm unhealed!"
It whispers: "Don't get too close."

The Vocabulary Gap

A woman walks into therapy and says: *I feel invisible, disconnected, anxious, overwhelmed, guilty, and sometimes ashamed of how much I need.*

A man walks in and says: *I'm tired.*

That's not a punchline. It's a symptom.

Because for decades, emotional vocabulary was coded female. Boys weren't just discouraged from naming feelings—they were punished.

"Don't cry."

"Man up."

"Stop being a pussy."

It's the emotional equivalent of cutting off a limb.

Then we wonder why he seems shut down in conflict.
Or why he doesn't open up even when invited.

He was trained to treat emotion like a landmine.
Not a landscape.

Empathy as a Second Language

Empathy isn't a fixed trait. It's a practiced one.
And the practice is different for each gender.

She was given mirrors: dolls, diaries, emotions with names.
He was given mazes: action figures, objectives, games with points.

So in adult life, she walks into a room and reads the emotional weather
without trying.

He walks in and scans for exits, angles, maybe snacks.

Neither is wrong.

But when she wants to be felt and he wants to solve... they miss each other
like ships in the fog.

He offers a wrench when she needs a witness.
She offers processing when he needs space.

The intentions are good. The translations are bad.

The Masculine Pain No One Talks About

Here's a stat that should stop every conversation cold:

Men make up nearly 80% of all suicides worldwide.

Not because they're weak.

But because they're silenced.

Culture hands them one emotional tool: *anger*.

Everything else—fear, grief, sadness, shame—gets buried under it or banished entirely.

So he drinks. Or works. Or trains until his knees give out.

He builds an empire just to feel okay in his own skin.

Meanwhile, no one asks how much of that achievement was just trying to outrun a father's disapproval.

Or a coach's cruelty.

Or the hollow silence that followed every failure.

You want to understand a man?

Don't start with his goals.

Start with his ghosts.

Her Quiet Rage

Now flip the lens.

She's been swallowing discomfort since the second grade.

Smiling at boys who interrupted her.

Apologizing before giving an opinion.

Being called *dramatic* for setting a boundary.

She's fluent in emotional caretaking, but no one taught her how to be selfish without guilt.

So she overgives. Then resents it. Then feels ashamed for resenting it.

She bends until her back breaks.
Then blames herself for not being flexible enough.

And when she finally does ask for more—sexually, emotionally, spiritually
—she’s told she’s “too much.”

Not too much.
Too awake.

Relationship as Revolution

What if every fight was an invitation?

What if your partner’s annoying trait is actually the thing they were never
allowed to fully become?

His emotional flatness isn’t a flaw. It’s a survival strategy.
Her hyper-reactivity isn’t madness. It’s muscle memory.

We don’t need better communication tools.
We need better compassion scaffolding.

Here’s what I’m learning about myself.
Here’s how I want to love you better.
Here’s what I was never taught but want to know.

This isn’t therapy-speak.
This is revolution.

Making the Invisible Visible

Next time your partner reacts in a way that seems irrational, try this:

Instead of: “That’s not a big deal.”

Try: “Can you tell me what this touches in you?”

Instead of: “Why are you so emotional?”

Try: “What do you need right now?”

Instead of: “Here we go again...”

Try: “I see this is familiar pain. Want to walk through it together?”

These aren’t tricks. They’re translations.

Because love without translation is exile.

And most people are exiled inside their own marriage.

The Bigger Ask

I’m not writing all this to dunk on men or glorify women.

I’m writing this because we are **missing each other in real time**.

And the cost is everything we came here to feel:

Belonging. Witness. Trust. Emotional nakedness that doesn’t feel like exposure.

I believe we can build something better.

Not a perfect relationship. But a **real one**.

Where both people are allowed to grow past their programming.

Where intimacy isn’t about compatibility—it’s about curiosity.

Where you stop trying to fix the other person and start learning what shaped them.

Where the relationship becomes your **joint liberation project**.

So What Now?

Next time the argument flares, try code-switching. Ask, “Do you want me to listen or fix?”

Offer up your own blind spots: “Here’s the safety math I run walking to my car.”

Or, “Here’s why admitting fear feels like failure to me.” Not cute exercises—lifelines.

And while we’re at it, let’s try the cabinet experiment.

Put forty highly competent women in charge for a term—not as a punchline but as a test run—and watch how quickly budgets tilt toward childcare, clean water, conflict mediation.

Then keep the risk-hungry men on the moon-shot committees and disaster response teams. Two operating systems, finally networked.

I’m not asking for utopia—just room for both logs in the campfire.

Because somewhere between her 4K memory and his rugged map of the dark lies a view wide enough for both hearts to breathe.

Until next time,

Anton Volney

Dancer, Writer, Buddhist.



P.S.: To get my summary notes and my sources, go [here](#).

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